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Message Text

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: WHO
SUBJECT: WHO - 61ST SESSION OF EXECUTIVE BOARD (JANUARY 11-27) -- FIRST WEEK

REF: STATE 141

1. SUMMARY. OFF TO SLOW START, EXECUTIVE BOARD (EB) AGREED INTER ALIA TO DIRECTOR GENERAL'S (DG) PROPOSAL TO USE UP TO $2 MILLION ANNUALLY IN CASUAL INCOME TO COUNTER CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS IN 1978 AND 1979; DECIDED TO RECOMMEND TO WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (WHA) ADOPTION OF 1978 SUPPLEMENTAL OF $6.6 MILLION; INDICATED GENERAL APPROVAL OF 1979 PROPOSED REGULAR BUDGET TOTALING $207,638,400; NOMINATED DG MAHLER FOR SECOND TERM; AND ENDORSED DG'S PLANS FOR APPROACHING MEMBER GOVERNMENTS AND PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY IN EFFORT TO PROMOTE EASIER ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL DRUGS BY LDCS. END SUMMARY.

2. CASUAL INCOME PROPOSAL (AGENDA ITEM 10) WAS ADOPTED 23 (US)-0-3 AFTER LONG DISCUSSION. ABSTAINING WERE GDR, CUBAN AND CZECH MEMBERS. GDR MEMBER SAID DG SHOULD TRY TO GET ADDITIONAL HELP FROM GOVERNMENTS "RESPONSIBLE" FOR CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS. CUBAN MEMBER AGREED THIS WAS ONE SOLUTION, BUT OTHERS MIGHT BE TRIED INSTEAD; HER MAIN
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CONCERN WAS OVER USE OF WHO'S SAVINGS (CASUAL INCOME) IN WAY THAT BROUGHT NO ADDED BENEFITS TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. CZECH MEMBER DEPLORED PROPOSED USE OF CASUAL INCOME AND ECHOED IDEAS ADVANCED EARLIER BY LIBYAN MEMBER THAT WHO HEADQUARTERS SHOULD PERHAPS BE MOVED FROM GENEVA. YUGOSLAV MEMBER ALSO SPOKE IN FAVOR OF SUCH MOVE. BANGLADESH MEMBER SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF USING "BASKET" OF CURRENCIES. US

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MEMBER SAID PROBLEM NOT CONFINED TO WHO AND BETTER ADDRESSED AT LEVEL OF UN. EB DECIDED THAT POSSIBLE "SOLUTIONS" SHOULD BE STUDIED AT NEXT SESSION OF EB PROGRAM COMMITTEE (IN NOVEMBER).

3. EB ACCEPTED WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE DISCUSSION SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET FOR 1978 (ITEM 11) AFTER DG'S CONVINCING PRESENTATION. VOTE WAS 26 (US)-0-1. EB RESOLUTION REQUESTS DG TO REPORT TO AN EB SUBCOMMITTEE WHICH MEETS ON EVE OF WHA NEXT MAY ON ANY DEVELOPMENTS DURING FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 1978 WHICH MAY HAVE BEARING ON SUBJECT. (COMMENT: IDEA IS THAT IF DOLLAR MAKES DRAMATIC RECOVERY IN COMING MONTHS, SUBCOMMITTEE MIGHT RECOMMEND SMALLER SUPPLEMENTAL. HOWEVER, IF DOLLAR DECLINES STILL FURTHER AGAINST SWISS FRANC, DG AND EB MEMBERS AGREED THAT WHO'S ONLY RECOURSE WILL BE FURTHER PROGRAM CUTBACKS AT HEADQUARTERS AND EVEN IN THE FIELD. END COMMENT.)

4. AGENDA ITEM 12 (1979 REVISED PROGRAM BUDGET, INCLUDING FURTHER $6.6 MILLION SUPPLEMENTAL) HAS NUMBER OF PROGRAM SUBITEMS WHOSE DISCUSSION IN RECENT DAYS HAD DELAYED VOTE UNTIL JANUARY 19. VOTE WAS 27 (US)-0-2. GDR AND CZECH MEMBERS ABSTAINED. ONE FEATURE OF 1979 BUDGET IS REDUCTION OF BUDGET RATE OF EXCHANGE FROM 2.65 (FIGURE USED IN ORIGINAL BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR 1979) TO 2.17 SWISS FRANCS TO DOLLAR.
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5. DG WAS RENOMINATED FOR SECOND TERM BY ACCLAMATION, AND DG REPRESENTATION ALLOWANCE INCREASED FROM $15,000 TO $20,000. FORMAL ELECTION WILL BE BY WHA. ONLY OTHER NAME PUT FORWARD FOR DG POSITION WAS THAT OF COMLAN QUENUM, WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA. QUENUM WAS NOMINATED BY ONE EB MEMBER AS "SECOND CHOICE" IN CASE DR MAHLER (HIS FIRST CHOICE) DECIDED NOT TO RUN.

6. EB ENDORSED PROPOSAL BY DG THAT HE EXPLORE WAYS TO IMPLEMENT INTERNATIONAL ACTION PROGRAM ON ESSENTIAL DRUGS. SHORT TERM OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO THESE DRUGS BY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. MEDIUM TERM AIM WOULD INCLUDE STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPABILITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN DRUG PRODUCTION AND QUALITY CONTROL. VANDEN HEUVEL

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